

DOCUMENTARY
PROTOCOLS I

EMULATION OF
THE ADMINISTRATIVE
ETHOS IN ARTISTIC
PRACTICES OF
THE 1960s AND 1970s
IN CANADA

MORRIS/TRASOV ARCHIVE,
N.E. THING CO.,
JOYCE WIELAND,
AND OTHER
COLLABORATORS

LEONARD & BINA ELLEN
ART GALLERY
MONTREAL
AUGUST 30 – OCTOBER 6, 2007

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO,
TORONTO, EDWARD P. TAYLOR
RESEARCH LIBRARY AND
ARCHIVES, IAIN BAXTER
FONDS.

01 "Companies Act: Memorandum
of Association of N.E. Thing Co.
(Certified a True Copy)" /
N.E. Thing Co., 1969. Document
of registration stamped with the
golden seal of the company, 4 pp.
BOX 9, FILE 18

02 "Please Complete and Return...":
Printing block / N.E. Thing Co.,
1969. BOX 11, FILE 1

03 "Please Complete and Return...":
Form for correspondence and
memoranda / N.E. Thing Co., 1969.
BOX 9, FILE 20

04 N.E. Thing Co. envelope
addressed to Seth Siegelau /
N.E. Thing Co., c.1969. Doodles
by Iain Baxter. BOX 9, FILE 19

05 N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Canadian
Pacific/Canadian National
Telecommunications charge
account identification card, 1969.
BOX 12, FILE 20

06 N.E. Thing Co. envelope
bearing letters of the alphabet
and containing exhibition invita-
tion card and N.E. Thing Co.
business card, 1970. BOX 12, FILE 22

07 Carbonless copy of memo
sent to Lucy Lippard, explaining
the company's departments /
N.E. Thing Co., 1969. BOX 8, FILE 11

08 Index cards from the "557,087"
exhibition, organized in Seattle
by Lucy Lippard, 1969 (also
presented in Vancouver (1970)
under the title "955,000") /
Lucy Lippard, 1969, 97 cards. The
numbers "557,087" and "955,000"
refer to the population of each city.
BOX 11, FILE 7

09 "INFORMATION About
N.E. Thing" / N.E. Thing Co., 1970.
Information sheet on the
"Global Trans-V.S.I. Network 1970"
telex and telecopier event.
BOX 12, FILE 21

10 "Teletypewriter Exchange
Service... Your Keys to Greater
Economy," c.1969.
BOX 11, FILE 26

11 Invitation for N.E. Thing Co.
exhibition at the Pacific Lutheran
University, Tacoma, October 1970 /
N.E. Thing Co., 1970.
BOX 15, FILE 56

12 "International Data Processing
Manager's Conference and
Business Exhibition," Seattle, 1970,
Minnesota, Data Processing
Management Association, 1970,
7 pp. Calendar of activities.
Iain Baxter had a kiosk and spoke
at the conference. A profile
of N.E. Thing Co. appeared
in the program. BOX 12, FILE 20

13 "N.E. Thing Consults with 1%
of You (...)" / N.E. Thing Co., 1970.
Folder offered to visitors of the
N.E. Thing Co. booth during
the International Data Processing
Manager's Conference and Busi-
ness Exhibition, Seattle,
in 1970. BOX 13, FILE 11

14 "University of British Columbia
University Examinations," c.1966,
Vancouver: University of British
Columbia, 10 pp. BOX 6, FILE 3

15 "NOW... Metered Mail for the
Smallest Office: The New, Low Cost
Model DM-3 Postage Meter,"
c.1967, Stamford: Pitney Bowes, n.p.
BOX 7, FILE 11

16 "Business Letters" / N. A. Nault
and Lewiss Magill, 1956,
San Francisco: Chandler Publishing,
36 pp. BOX 12, FILE 20

17 "The Earl Nightengale Executive Presentation EXECUPAK," 1970. BOX 15, FILE 18

18 "Clerical Salary Survey: Vancouver Area." Vancouver: Vancouver Board of Trade, 1970, 39 pp. BOX 16, FILE 15

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA ARCHIVES, OTTAWA. EXHIBITION RECORDS NO. 1343. THE N.E. THING COMPANY LIMITED, NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, JUNE 4-JULY 6, 1969. Exhibition curated by Pierre Th  berge.

19 *Invitation to the exhibition "N.E. Thing Company Limited" addressed to Len Hopkins, M.P., House of Commons, Ottawa* / N.E. Thing Co., 1969. 1343

20 *Message to Pierre Elliott Trudeau* / N.E. Thing Co., June 20, 1969, 2 sheets. Text typewritten on N.E. Thing Co. stationery. 1343

21 "ACT No. 9" / N.E. Thing Co., 1969. ACT certificate (Aesthetically Rejected Thing) denying sensitive information status to the Ottawa Mall fountain. 1343

22 "ACT No. 122" / N.E. Thing Co., 1969. ACT certificate (Aesthetically Claimed Thing) conferring sensitive information status on the rain running down the sides of National Arts Centre Building ("Nothing else") 1343

23 "N.E. THING CO. TRANSSES.I. Inform (...) - May 18, 1969. NETCO. Iain Baxter, President, Elaine Baxter, Vice-President" / N.E. Thing Co., 1969. Example of an image sent during a communication event in 1969. 1343

24 "ACT No. 113. Xerox Telecopier II and Whole Concept of Transceiving (1969)" / N.E. Thing Co., 1969. Booklet of the Xerox Telecopier declared "ACT" by N.E. Thing Co., stamped with the golden seal of the company. 1343

25 *Installation of the exhibition "N.E. Thing Company Limited,"* 1969. B&W photographic prints. 1343

26 *Exhibition "N.E. Thing Company Limited,"* 1969. B&W and Polaroid photographic prints. 1343

27 "Report on the Activities of the N.E. Thing Co. of North Vancouver, British Columbia, at the NGC and Other Locations (...)" / Pierre Th  berge; N.E. Thing Co., Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969, 38 pp. 1343

— NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA ARCHIVES, OTTAWA. EXHIBITION RECORDS NO. 1420. JOYCE WIELAND, TRUE PATRIOT LOVE = V  RITABLE AMOUR PATRIOTIQUE, NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, JULY 2-AUGUST 8, 1971. Exhibition curated by Pierre Th  berge.

28 "Illustrated Flora of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago" / A.E. Porsild, Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State, 1964 (Museum of Nature Bulletin No. 146), 218 pp. 1420

29 *Maquette of the exhibition catalogue "Joyce Wieland, True Patriot Love = V  ritable amour patriotique (...)"* / Joyce Wieland, 1971. Samples of original pages (72-73, 76-77, 160-161). 1420

30 "True Patriot Love = V  ritable amour patriotique" (exhibition catalogue) / Joyce Wieland, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1971. 223 pp. 1420

— MORRIS AND HELEN BELKIN ART GALLERY, VANCOUVER. MORRIS / TRASOV ARCHIVE.

31 *Rubber Stamps* / Image Bank, 1970-1974. Samples. 24. 01., BOX C12

32 *Notebook* / Michael Morris, 1977-1978. Prints of artist's stamps collected by Morris during a trip to Europe. 143. 34., BOX 107

33 *Image Bank postcard exhibition, 1971* / Image Bank, 1971. 80 postcards. 39. 05., BOX A2

34 "Inventors of 1984: Please Send Your Image of 1984 to Image Bank..." / Image Bank, 1972. Graphic layout of a request sent to various Image Bank network participants in 1972 and responses received (approx. 150 items). 124. 05.; 33. 01., BOX B10

35 *Fat City School of Finds Art, Anartist (...)* / Lowell Darling, c.1972. Two "Master of Finds Arts" degrees received by Image Bank and Mr. Peanut. 33. 02., BOX 10

36 "Great Wall of 1984" / Glenn Lewis, 1973, 4 items from the mailing. 113. 50., BOX C84

37 "The Marcel Duchamp Fan Club: Cultural Ecology Project. Please Send Piss Pics for Barbara Rrose..." / Image Bank, 1972. Graphic layout of a request sent to various Image Bank network participants in 1972 and responses received (approx. 112 items). 105. 16.; 33. 02., BOX 10



38 *Image requests sent to various Image Bank network participants during the exhibition "Canada: Trajectories," (Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, summer 1973), and other items from the project /* Image Bank, 1973. 52. 01., BOX C36

39 *Notebook /* Michael Morris. 1973. 144. 01., BOX 107

40 *"International Image Exchange Directory" /* Image Bank, 1972. Vancouver: Talon Books, 205 pp. 24. 12., BOX C12

41 *"FILE Magazine" /* General Idea, February 1974. 47 pp. NO ACCESSION NUMBER

42 *Photostat enlargements of Image Bank participants' addresses and their image requests /* Image Bank, 1978. 18. 123. 19

43 *"Archives Index Card (...Please add my name and address to the mailing list. I am interested in images of...)" /* Image Bank, 1972. Graphic layout. NO ACCESSION NUMBER

44 *Graphic layout of an Image Bank cheque ("Image Bank - Banque d'Images...") /* Image Bank, 1972. NO ACCESSION NUMBER

45 *Image request cards /* Image Bank, c.1972. Samples. 32. 20. BOX C22

46 *Graphic layout for Image Bank currency ("Canada Mondo Arte Image Bank - Banque d'Images...") /* Image Bank, 1972. NO ACCESSION NUMBER

47 *Image Bank Annual Report /* Image Bank, 1972. Vancouver: Intermedia Press, 19 pp. 52. 01., BOX C36

48 *"Image Bank" and "Legal Tender" Rubber Stamps /* Image Bank, 1972. 39. 18., BOX A1

49 *Envelope collection /* Image Bank, 1971-1974. Samples. 64. 03., BOX C42

50 *Stationery collection /* Image Bank, 1971-1975. Samples. 64. 02., BOX C42

51 *Bank note collection /* Image Bank, 1971-1975. Samples. 26. 05., BOX C14

52 *Business card collection /* Image Bank, 1971-1975. Samples. 64. 02., BOX C42

53 *"Space Atlas" /* Dana Atchley (Ace Space Co.), 1971, approx. 120 sheets in three-ring binder. Atchley asked a group of artists to send him projects on paper through the mail. He then assembled the material received to create a publication distributed to the artists. A contributor to this project, Image Bank also added Atchley's list of participants to its 1972 directory (see no. 40). 113.37., BOX C84

54 *Catalogue cards for the Image Bank archives /* Image Bank, c.1974. Samples. Cards describing "Space Atlas" by Dana Atchley (1970). 57. 45., BOX A10

55 *Letter to Vincent Trasov from the Vancouver City Clerk announcing the number of votes Mr. Peanut received during the 1974 mayoralty election, November 26, 1974.* 18. 08., BOX C5

56 *"Nut Runs for Mayor." The Province (October 31, 1974). Press clipping.* 18.8., BOX C5

57 *"The Rise and Fall of the Peanut Party: Nomination and Other Papers (...)" /* John Mitchell and Vincent Trasov, 1976. Vancouver: Air, 79 pp. 11., BOX C1

58 *"Letter to Mr. Peanut," (Vincent Trasov) with postcard (self-portrait of the artist) /* Les Levine, January 14, 1975. 124. 11

59 *"After Art, Museum of Mott Art Inc., New York: Catalogue of After Art Services" /* Les Levine, 1974. In this booklet, Levine describes the consultation services he offered to art professionals through the museum. 113. 87., BOX C72

60 *"Language-Emotion-Syntax-Message (Exhibition Catalogue)," /* Les Levine, 1974. Vancouver, Vancouver Art Gallery, 32 pp. 56. 4., BOX C38

NATIONAL GALLERY
OF CANADA ARCHIVES,
OTTAWA.
ART METROPOLE
DOCUMENTARY FILE

61 *Letter sent to J. Hunter (then Deputy Librarian of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa) announcing the opening of Art Metropole Inc., Toronto /* General Idea, October 28, 1974. The letterhead reproduces an image of the artist-run center building's facade on Yonge Street.

The Iain Baxter fonds, held by the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, stands as an exception to what one might consider a typology of artists' archives. On a familiar level, it includes documents on Baxter's works of art and his teaching activities. But the fonds also incorporates records from the N.E. Thing Co. of North Vancouver, created in 1966, incorporated in 1969, and led by co-presidents Iain and Ingrid Baxter.

This segment of the fonds contains a wide range of documentary materials. The company's transactions with municipal authorities generated official documents, deeds, minutes, legal correspondence, and the like. N.E. Thing Co. produced graphic templates to advertise the services offered through its various departments. These seals, leaflets, information sheets and business cards were above all created for artists and art critics in the know, but they also served to legitimise the company among representatives of the business world 2-6, 11-13.

The records held by public museums often offer unique residual documentary material not generally found in artists' archives. In 1969, under the curatorship of Pierre Théberge, N.E. Thing Co. installed the company's "head office" on the ground floor of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. For a time, this space reclaimed its original purpose, as the museum building was first conceived to house government offices 25, 26. In keeping with this newly revived function, the remnants of the administrative tasks performed by gallery employees and the documents generated through the artists' parallel business activities were placed side by side in the exhibition file 19-24. As a follow-up to this event, N.E. Thing Co. and Théberge published a corporate operations report 27.

As part of the 1971 Joyce Wieland retrospective entitled *True Patriot Love = Véritable amour patriotique*, Théberge once again shunned the bureaucratic

DOCUMENTARY PROTOCOLS 1

veneer of the museum and his role as official propaganda organ. Instead of a traditional catalogue, the artist and curator produced a hybrid publication that appropriated the content of the 1964 Museum of Nature *Bulletin No.146, Illustrated Flora of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago* 28. In a close simulation of the cover of her model, Wieland juxtaposed Canada's coat of arms with the bilingual title of the exhibition 30. She then subverted the document into a subjective tome of handwritten notes, photos, snippets of a film script, and dried flowers (with each of these interpolations subtly evoking the works in the retrospective) 29.

The ironic use of public relations tools and official documentary protocols heralded the emergence of the parallel centres of the mid 1970s. Other projects conducted prior to this trans-canadian phenomenon had already begun to redefine the function of the artist as cultural worker. Between 1969 and 1977, Vincent Trasov and Michael Morris (with the brief participation of Gary Lee-Nova) operated the Image Bank network in Vancouver, skirting the conventional art circuit. Envisioned during the project's infancy, the Morris/Trasov Archive (on deposit at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver) brings together the personal archives of the two artists and the documents gathered in the context of their Image Bank activities.

During its fledgling years, the organisation compiled the addresses of hundreds of visual artists, film-makers and art critics as well as their request correspondence (for images, letters, collages, etc.). Data was gathered using a form that included spaces to enter one's contact information and the details of the request 43, 45. A series of similar index cards later served to catalogue the documents Image Bank kept in its archives 54. In 1972, the organisation published its first alphabetical directory of the individuals on file 40. The distribution of this tool had a snowball effect that saw the

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entire network expand, and this in turn increased the volume of documents in the fonds exponentially.

Beyond the pragmatics involved, the strategies deployed to administer this influx of correspondence were both a parody and a utopian reversal of existing bureaucratic structures. Morris and Trasov viewed their accumulating wealth of documents as symbolic capital to be reinvested **48**. To accompany the publication of its mailing list, Image Bank published an account of its activities since its creation in the format of an annual report **47**. And, like so many of its collaborators (Dana Atchley, General Idea, Ant Farm, etc.), the organisation also produced logos, currency, letterhead, and rubber stamps **31, 48-52**.

The Image Bank concept and ideas were widely circulated by its participants, breeding a range of personal and collective myths. A 1972 request for images of the year 1984 led to an iconography of the future reflected in the art of many of the network's participants **34**. Within this same spirit, information management models were freely distributed with no artists claiming the rights to their offerings. In 1973, Glenn Lewis requisitioned everyday objects and assorted collections of items. These were then arranged in transparent boxes (each attributed a year between 1620 and 1984 by the participants) and collectively comprised the mural entitled *The Great Wall of 1984*, housed in the library of the National Research Council of Canada (Ottawa) **36**. Beginning in 1972, General Idea offered the pages of its *FILE* magazine to update the mailing lists compiled by Trasov and Morris **41**. In 1974, the collective publicized the existence of archives, which contained among other documents linked to the network activities, correspondence with Image Bank. This fonds is now housed at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa **61**.